

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. Speaker, tonight the Speaker of the House is the special host of a dinner to benefit National Empowerment Television, a radical right-wing TV station devoted solely to espouse reactionary views over the airways 24 hours a day. It is appalling that there is a TV station designed not to be objective, but to brainwash, and to boot it is tax deductible.

Just as appalling is the price tag for the dinner, \$50,000 a plate.

What do you they serve at a \$50,000-a-plate dinner? First is access, a chance to rub elbows with the Speaker; second, and just as outrageous, a huge taxpayer subsidy. That is right. Unlike meals most working Americans eat, this one comes with a special \$19,800 tax break. About a dozen people are attending the dinner, for a total tax break of \$237,600, enough money for 21,000 meals-on-wheels for the elderly.

□ 1120

By the way, if you are working for the minimum wage, it will take you 5 years, 45 weeks, 4 days, 2 hours and 33 minutes to pay for this one dinner. I guess that dinner will be served in the year 2000 on December 22. The fundraiser is wrong. The price tag is way out of line. The TV station is bizarre and the taxpayer subsidy is a disgrace.

MINIMUM WAGE

(Mr. BAKER of California asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BAKER of California. Mr. Speaker, in his State of the Union Address, President Clinton made the point that a Member of Congress earns more in a month than a minimum-wage worker earns in a year. Well, perhaps a more interesting statistic is the Federal Government spends more in less than 4 days than all the 3.5 million minimum-wage earners make in a full year. Yet in his new budget, the President proposes that we spend \$50 billion more next year than this year, \$50 billion we do not have.

While the President has taken some small, positive steps, it is clear he is not up to making the tough decisions on the budget. So we in Congress, yesterday, voted to give the President a new tool, the line-item veto. We would like to have the President as a partner, but we are prepared to go it alone in balancing the budget.

We are going to improve the lot of minimum-wage earners and middle-income Americans and the best way to do it is to get the Federal budget under control and grow the economy.

Our Contract With America will do precisely that by lowering taxes, reducing Federal regulation and Government spending and increasing incentives for work and investment. The results will be a balanced budget by the year 2002, the sooner, the better.

SPECIAL INTERESTS

(Mrs. SCHROEDER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. SCHROEDER. Mr. Speaker, to anyone who is wondering why Public Citizen, Common Cause, and almost every other good Government group I know and many others are calling for outside counsel to investigate the growing array of special interest connections that are alleged to be gathering at the Speaker's doorstep, watch tonight. Because tonight lifestyles of the rich and famous come to Washington.

Yes, for \$50,000 you can get a dinner. Well, the steak better be good. Yes, you can get a dinner, but you can also get access. And that dinner can be publicly subsidized because you as a taxpayer are going to pay \$19,800 for that dinner. So if you are outraged by that dinner, think about it. Especially on the very same day the Speaker is quoted in the Washington Post as saying public high school is nothing but publicly subsidized dating.

Please, what is wrong? Let us get on with an outside counsel and get this cleared up.

THE CRIME BILL

(Mr. WHITE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. WHITE. Mr. Speaker, I have looked forward to this moment for a long time. These are my first remarks on the floor of the House.

I have waited for this moment for an important reason. The crime bill that we are about to consider this week is one of the most important things that this Congress will do in the entire 2 years we are here.

I have said many times that the crime bill that passed last year was not an example of everything that is wrong with Congress. It was directed at an important national problem, but it did not solve that problem. It spread social spending out in every congressional district, a little bit of pork for every Congressman. It was the worst tradition of politics as usual.

This year we are going to be different. This year's bill focuses on what the Federal Government can do to solve the crime problem, including building more prisons, changing some of our procedural rules, and sending the responsibility back to the local governments to decide what to do.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be here. I am proud of this Congress. And I look forward to dealing with this crime bill over the next week.

THE MINIMUM WAGE

(Mrs. CLAYTON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. CLAYTON. Mr. Speaker, the distance between low- and high-income families is growing. We must act now to close that gap. If we do not act, the cost of basic necessities—housing, food, and clothing—may be unaffordable for these families. Those costs are rising. Earnings for low-income families are falling. An increase in the minimum wage, as proposed by the President, will help to close the gap. With no minimum wage increase, those with little money end up with less money.

An increase in the minimum wage will not provide plenty, but it can raise working families out of poverty. In 1993, high-income families averaged \$104,616 in earnings. Low-income families averaged \$12,964. Between 1980 and 1992, income for the top 20 percent in America increased by 16 percent while income for the bottom 20 percent decreased by 7 percent. An increase in the minimum wage will help low-income families, but it will not hurt high-income families. The growing income gap hurts the economy. The best welfare reform is minimum wage reform. Low-income workers are helped. The economy is helped. No one is hurt. If we want to help people, we should help them and not hurt them.

PUT TEETH BACK IN THE CRIME BILL

(Mr. HOKE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. HOKE. Mr. Speaker, when the Democrats passed their soft-on-crime bill last year, we were assured that it would be tough on criminals and attack crime's root causes. But once the American people learned what it was—dance classes and midnight basketball, what they called hugs for thugs—they issued a very different verdict at the polls. They said the Democrat crime bill was guilty of being pollyannaish, that it coddled criminals instead of incarcerating them, and they said, "We want our streets back. We want the criminal justice system to act as a deterrent. We believe that you have got to catch, convict, and confine. That is what criminal justice is all about."

When we take up the crime bill today, we are going to put some real teeth back into it and give our police and prosecutors the tools that they need to do their job effectively. We are going to stop frivolous appeals. We are going to end the practice of letting criminals off on technicalities and build more prisons to keep them off the streets.

Our Constitution demands that we ensure domestic tranquility, a duty that we have been failing at recently. That changes, starting today.

SUPPORT OUR AFFIRMATIVE ACTION LAWS

(Mr. STOKES asked and was given permission to address the House for 1